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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 001057

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/PPC, AND WHA/CEN  
STATE FOR PM, PM/RSAT, AND PM/PMAT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [HA](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: HONDURAS REITERATES REASON FOR IRAQ WITHDRAWAL;  
EXPRESSES POSSIBLE INTEREST IN HAITI DEPLOYMENT

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 910

[B](#). STATE 87181

[C](#). FM ROSA BAUTISTA-SECRETARY POWELL APRIL 16 LETTER

[D](#). CJCS-CHOD APRIL 15 2004 LETTER

[E](#). TEGUCIGALPA 893

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires Roger D. Pierce;  
reasons 1.4 (a), (b), and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: On May 4, PolCouns, DATT, and PolMilOff met with Minister of Defense (MOD) Federico Breve and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) General Jose Isaias Barahona to discuss Iraq and SOUTHCOM's proposed Regional Training Initiative (RTI). During the course of conversation, both Government of Honduras (GOH) officials stated an interest in Honduran participation in the UN peacekeeping mission to Haiti, but indicated a period of approximately six months would be necessary before any troops could be deployed. MOD Breve and CJCS Barahona expressed some nervousness over how the GOH's announcement to withdraw from Iraq had been received in Washington and again affirmed that the CJCS-CHOD April 15 letter (ref D) was the main reason for Honduras' decision to leave Iraq. The GOH also stands ready to move forward on RTI in principle, but it is awaiting a formal request from SOUTHCOM and further details on how to proceed. End Summary.

[2](#). (C) MOD Breve and CJCS Barahona stated the GOH chose to leave Iraq before completing their one-year obligation due to the substance of the CJCS-CHOD April 15 letter (ref D). They stated the Honduran constitution prohibits the GOH from participating in offensive combat operations and that the Honduran National Congress had explicitly stated the GOH deployment was intended for the sole purpose of humanitarian assistance. The GOH felt that any modification of the original mission was beyond the scope envisioned when the GOH agreed to deploy troops to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

[3](#). (C) MOD Breve stated that the GOH had agreed previously with the U.S. not to share the contents of the CJCS-CHOD letter publicly. The GOH remains concerned, however, that the reason for the Honduran troops' withdrawal is not entirely understood in Washington and they are concerned that the GOH's decision could negatively affect the bilateral relationship.

[4](#). (C) MOD Breve stated he expected Honduran troops to be out of Iraq and into neighboring Kuwait by May 21. The final details of how to return the troops from Kuwait are still being coordinated. CJCS Barahona said he remains concerned about force protection issues as GOH forces withdraw from Iraq as they will be vulnerable once outside their protected compound.

[5](#). (C) During the course of conversation on Iraq and international peacekeeping missions in general, DATT queried MOD Breve and CJCS Barahona on the GOH's willingness to consider participating in UN authorized peacekeeping operations in Haiti. (Note: Previously, MOD Breve had asked the U.S. informally not to formally request a Honduran deployment to Haiti due to the GOH's obligations in Iraq. End Note). Both GOH officials stated an interest in a Honduran deployment, but indicated a period of approximately six months would be necessary before any GOH troops could again be sent abroad. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General for Foreign Policy Ambassador Mario Fortin told Acting PolCouns May 6 that the GOH might be interested in assisting in Haiti, but noted that the current political climate was not good. Fortin said that absent a clearer United Nations Security Council resolution that covered peacekeeping instead of stabilization, the GOH would not be able to participate. He said the GOH understood that Brazil was pushing for such a resolution. Fortin noted that the MFA had also talked to the French about possibly sending Honduran troops to Haiti.

[6](#). (U) On the evening of May 6, President Ricardo Maduro announced that his government was analyzing a UN request for Honduran participation in peacekeeping operations in Haiti. He added, however, that the Congress might not view the request favorably because the Honduran troops will just be returning from Iraq.

17. (SBU) MOD Breve and CJCS Barahona stated the GOH was ready to move forward in principle on SOUTHCOM's RTI proposal but the GOH was still waiting for a formal request from the United States. (Note: MILGP is preparing a formal RTI letter on SOUTHCOM's behalf requesting a GOH response. This letter should be delivered to the GOH shortly. End Note) Both officials also indicated they are very interested in receiving more details from SOUTHCOM on exactly how RTI will function.

18. (C) Comment: MOD Breve and CJCS Barahona remain concerned about the GOH's planned withdrawal from Iraq and how it will affect Honduras' relationship with the United States. As a result, Post believes the GOH might now be willing to deploy peacekeeping troops to Haiti, if requested, as a means of demonstrating Honduras' continued interest in international peacekeeping operations. However, such a request would have a higher chance of success after Honduran troops in Iraq have returned to Honduras and the UNSC passes another resolution on Haiti that addresses the GOH's concerns. End Comment.

19. (U) Minimize considered.  
PIERCE